

CD 2002-126



Thursdays at Noon
presents

MUSIC AND POETRY

Michèle Bogdanowicz, mezzo-soprano
John Hawkins, piano

Thursday, October 31, 2002
12:10 pm. Walter Hall

The Ugly Duckling, op. 18 (1914, rev. 1932)
(Tale by Hans Christian Andersen)

Sergei Prokofiev
(1891-1953)

Six Poems of Marina Tsvetayeva, op. 143 (1974)

Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)

1. To my verses
2. Why such tenderness?
3. Hamlet's dialogue with his conscience
4. The poet and the tsar
5. No, the drum did beat
6. To Anna Akhmatova

Spanish Songs, op. 100 (1956)
arranged for mezzo-soprano and piano

Shostakovich

1. Adios, Grenada
2. Little stars
3. First meeting
4. Round
5. Black-eyed maiden
6. Dream (Barcarolle)

This recital is performed on the Edith McConica Steinway piano

The next Music and Poetry lecture/concert will take place on Thursday Feb. 13, 2003 at 12:10 PM in Walter Hall. The programme includes John Hawkins' **no man, if men are gods*** (e.e.cummings) for baritone, vibraphone and string quartet, as well as **Tel jour telle nuit** (Paul Éluard) by Francis Poulenc and **Chansons de Don Quichotte** by Jacques Ibert. The performers will be Matthew Leigh, baritone, John Hawkins, piano, and an instrumental ensemble; Prof. Eric Domville will provide commentary.

*first performance

Artist Biographies

Michèle Bogdanowicz

A graduate of the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, Michèle holds a B. Mus. (Performance) and a Diploma in Operatic Performance. She has received a generous grant from the Ontario Arts Council Chalmers Foundation and will continue her vocal studies with Jean MacPhail and Daniel Ferro (The Juilliard School, New York City), and learn operatic roles with Stuart Hamilton and Liz Upchurch. Earlier this year, Michèle was chosen to perform as soloist with EMI recording artists the St. Lawrence String Quartet in concert at Walter Hall.

You can visit Michèle's website at www.Michèle-Bogdanowicz.com.

John Hawkins

Since 1994 pianist and composer John Hawkins has organized the Music and Poetry lecture/concert series. The series focuses on vocal music of the last one hundred years. So far, over 45 works by 23 different composers have been performed including a number of pieces that Hawkins has written especially for the series. His latest composition, **no man, if men are gods**, a setting of a poem by e.e.cummings, will be performed for the first time in February 2003.

The Ugly Duckling (after H.C. Andersen)

How pretty it was in the country! The sun was cheerfully shining, the rye shone golden, fragrant hay lay in stacks. In a green corner, among burdock leaves, a duck sat on her eggs. She was bored and exhausted from the long wait.

Finally, the eggshells began to crack one after the other. The ducklings crawled into the light. "How big is God's world! How big is God's world!" The last duckling was very ugly, featherless and long-legged.

"Could he be a turkey?" said the frightened duck's neighbour. The duck's brood proceeded to the poultry yard. "Hold yourselves upright, children. Bow low to that old duck- she's of Spanish breed. See the red stripe on her leg? This is the highest sign of duck honour! "The ducklings bowed low to the Spanish duck and soon familiarized themselves with all the inhabitants of the poultry yard.

It was hard only for the poor ugly duckling. Everyone laughed at him, chased him away and hoped that a cat would eat him up quickly. The hens pecked him, the ducks pinched him, people kicked him with their feet, and a turkey cock, having puffed himself up like a vessel in full sail, jumped on the poor duckling!

The duckling gathered together all his strength and flew over the fence. The birds sitting in the bushes started up in fright. The duckling thought, "It's because I'm so ugly..." He closed his eyes but still continued to run until he reached a marsh. There, wild ducks attacked him. "What sort of bird are you?" The duckling kept turning to all sides. "You are terribly ugly!" The duckling bowed as low as he could. "Don't you even think about marrying one of us!" How could the duckling even think of that!

Thus began his wanderings. What did he not have to bear during that frightening autumn! Sometimes he sat for hours in the rushes, still from fright and trembling in terror. And hunters' gunshots sounded all around the forest. A horrible dog's jaw gaped above his head! It was getting colder; the lake was gradually covering up with ice. The duckling had to swim all the time so the water would not freeze. It would be too sad to tell of all the privations that he endured during that winter.

One day the sun heated up the earth with its warm rays; larks began to sing; the bushes bloomed; spring came! Happily, the duckling flapped his wings; during the winter they had grown. The duckling rose up on his wings and flew into a spacious blooming garden. It was so pretty there! Suddenly three beautiful swans appeared out of the thicket. An inexplicable force drew the duckling to these regal birds. If he approached them they would certainly kill him because he was so ugly... But it was better to die from their blows than to endure everything he had suffered in the course of the winter.

"Kill me...", said the duckling and lowered his head awaiting death. But what did he see in the clear water? His reflection! However, now he was not an ugly gray bird, but a wonderful swan. It's no misfortune to be born in a duck's nest, as long as you come from a swan's egg! The sun caressed him; lilacs bowed before him; the swans tenderly kissed him! Could he ever have dreamed of such happiness when he was an ugly duckling?

(English translation from the Russian courtesy of Rimma Skeini)

Six Poems of Marina Tsvetayeva

1. To my verses

To my verses, written so early,
That I wasn't aware I was a poet,
That flew out, like spray from a fountain,
Like sparks from a rocket.

That burst through, like little devils,
Into a shrine of dream and incense
To my verses of youth and death,
-Unread verses!-

Carelessly scattered around in dusty shops
(Where no one has chosen to buy them!)
To my verses, like precious wines,
Their time will come!

2. Why such tenderness?

Why such tenderness?
These are not the first such curls I've stroked,
And lips I have known darker than yours.

Stars have shone and grown dim
(Why such tenderness?)
Eyes have shone and grown dim
So close to my own eyes.

These are not the songs
I have heard in night's darkness
(Why such tenderness?)
On the breast of the singer.

Why such tenderness?
And what to do with it, sly
Youth, wandering singer,
With eyelashes- the longest ever?

3. Hamlet's dialogue with his conscience

-She's at the bottom, in the muck and waterweeds...
She went there to sleep,-
But there's no sleep there either!

-But I loved her
As forty thousand brothers
Could not love her!-

Hamlet! She's at the bottom in the muck: muck!
And her last wreath floated up
To the riverbank logs...

-But I loved her, as forty thousand...-
Less, however, than one lover.
She's at the bottom, in the muck.
--But I loved her??-

4. The Poet and the Tsar

In the otherworldly Hall of the Tsars...
- Who is the proud marble one?

Magnificently adorned with gold?
- The pitiful gendarme of Pushkin's glory.

The author- he cursed, manuscripts- he slashed.
Polish lands- he butchered like a beast.

Take a look! Do not forget:
The poet-murderer Tsar Nicholas the First!

5. No, the drum did beat

No, the drum did beat in front of the confused regiment,
When our leader was buried:
Like the teeth of the Tsar beating over the dead poet,
Drumming the roll of honour.

Indeed, such an honour that for his closest friends-
No room. At the head, at the foot,
On the right, on the left- arms down their seams-
Policemen's chests and mugs.

(Please turn page quietly!)

Isn't it amazing, even on this quietest of beds
 He's supervised like a little boy?
 It's something, something, something like honour,
 A great honour-yes, too much!

Look, in this country, despite rumours,
 Your monarch prizes the poet!
 Honours, honours, honours- super-honours,
 - honours- to the devil!

Who indeed is this- as if the thief of all thieves
 had been shot- they're carrying out?
 A traitor? No. Down the gangway into the yard-
 The wisest man in Russia.

6. To Anna Akhmatova

O muse of weeping, most beautiful of muses!
 O you, wild offspring of the white night!
 You cast a black blizzard over Russia,
 And your howls pierce us like arrows.

And we shy away, and the muffled: akh!
 -Of a hundred-thousand- swears allegiance to you. Anna
 Akhmatova!- This name is an enormous sigh,
 And it falls into the chasm which is nameless.

We are crowned by this, at one with you
 Treading the same earth, the sky above us is the same also!
 And whoever has been wounded by your mortal fate,
 Already immortal, shall sink to their deathbed.

In my city of songs, cupolas are gleaming,
 And the radiant Saviour is glorified by a blind beggar...
 And I give to you the bells of the city,
 Akhmatova!- and my own heart also.

Marina Tsvetayeva (1892-1941)

(Special thanks to R. Sterling Beckwith for the use of his translations.)

Spanish Songs

1. Adios, Grenada

Adios, Grenada, my Grenada,
I must part from you forever!
Adios, beloved place, my eyes' delight,
Forever adios! Ah!
The memory of you will be my only joy,
My beloved, my native place!

Grief has pierced my heart forever,
Everything that was dear in life has died,
My love has gone into the gloomy grave,
And so has my life! Ah!
And everything around has become repellent to me,
I have no strength to live there as before
Where youth was so bright!

2. Little stars

Under the old cypress trees shines the smooth water.
I am going to my darling with a guitar to teach her songs.
But I have no desire to teach without a fee:
For every note I will take from her a kiss.
Strange how by morning she will know everything except notes!

Pity that it is too late to start over!
Pity that the sky is already bright!
Pity that during the day the stars do not flicker timidly over the waters...

The star-studded sky is endless, the hot midnight full of stars.
To my darling I call out the names of all the innumerable stars.
I value my knowledge and take from her a kiss for each name.
Strange how the lesson seems simple to her-
Everything except the stars!

Pity that it is too late to start over!
Pity that the sky is already bright!
Pity that during the day the stars do not flicker timidly over the waters...

3. First meeting

By a stream you once gave me water,
 Fresh water, colder than the snow in blue mountain canyons.
 Your gaze is darker than the night,
 In your braids there is a fragrance of wild mint...

See, the round dance spins again,
 Tambourines ring, roar and sing.
 Every dancer leads his girlfriend,
 People watch them, admiringly.

Strike, my tambourine, strike, roar like thunder!
 My darling and I are dancing together.
 Your lace is bluer than the skies!
 Strike, my tambourine, strike!
 Tambourine, strike! Tambourine, strike!

I will never forget this first meeting,
 The endearing words and the swarthy hand, and the shining dark eyes...
 In that hour I understood
 That I love you and will love you forever!

See, the round dance spins again,
 Tambourines ring, roar and sing,
 Every dancer leads his girlfriend,
 People watch them admiringly.

Strike, my tambourine, strike, roar like thunder!
 My darling and I are dancing together.
 Your lace is bluer than the skies!
 Strike, my tambourine, strike!
 Tambourine, strike! Tambourine, strike!

4. Round

A round dance comes noisily to our door,
The time of merriment has come.
Come dance with me quickly,
A red carnation flower!
In the moonlit silence, the ringing of spring is heard...
Give me your hand, my girl,
A red carnation flower!

The street is like a bright garden.
Jokes are exchanged, eyes are shining,
The round is spinning and singing,
The dome of the sky shines with starry silver,
Jolly couples are whirling around...
This is a joyous celebration of the first flowers,
This is a celebration of our love!

In a moonlight ray on the window,
Shadows of almond trees are playing...
When will you come out here to me,
My tender spring flower?
Pick an almond branch from the tree,
Give it to me as a sign of your love,
My tender spring flower!

The street is like a bright garden.
Jokes are exchanged, eyes are shining.
The round is spinning and singing,
The dome of the sky shines with starry silver,
Jolly couples are whirling around...
This is a celebration of the first flowers,
This is a celebration of our love!

5. Black-eyed maiden

Your mother has given you eyes like stars,
 The tender colour of your swarthy cheeks,
 My darling!
 With pain in my heart late at night
 Without you I wander, lonely,
 My darling!
 Ah, why was I punished by fate?
 Ah, why did I ever meet you?
 I will die from this terrible love,
 If you do not love me,
 My darling!

Your mother has given you stature,
 The black shine of your unruly curls,
 My darling!
 I curse the cruel fate,
 The pain and suffering of my soul,
 My darling!
 O why did your mother give you
 Such beauty in spite of me?
 I will die from this terrible love,
 If you do not love me,
 My darling!

6. Dream (Barcarolle)

I don't know what it means...
 I saw a wonderful dream,
 As if in a fisherman's boat
 I drift along a stormy wave.
 A canoe without paddles; I dropped them...
 The waves bubble angrily and drown my canoe,
 But bravely I rush among dark, enormous waves,
 Because in this fisherman's boat
 Along the unruly sea depth
 You are floating, my proud one, floating together with me
 As if you also love me!
 O, my little dove! Look how
 In his fragile little boat
 Drifts along the sea the poor fellow
 Who so strongly loves you!

(Russian texts from the Spanish by S. Bolotin and T. Sikorskaya. English translations courtesy of Rimma Skeini)